



# CROSSING INTO THE BLUE

Story and photo by Master Sgt. Ken Wright

**A**s a young boy, Senior Airman Joe Sison dreamed of slipping the surly bonds above his island nation. Raised by his grandmother in the Filipino town of Surallah, his dream failed to take flight when he realized how little Filipino airmen earn. And, this amiable young man felt he was forced to follow in his father's footsteps and become a local politician. A fate his heart could not embrace.

All that changed when, at 16, he received a small package from the United States. It contained some official looking documents and a letter from his mother — whom only a few years earlier he had spoken to for the first time. As the teenager read his mother's words, he discovered something about himself he had never before imagined — he was an American. Suddenly, opportunities were abound.

"When I was 18, I thought ... maybe I could be a part of the U.S. Air Force," he said.

Having few connections in the United States, he set his sights on California, where he could stay with a family friend. But funding the trip was an entirely different issue. Though his family provided for him as a child, he now needed to earn the money himself. While not the most glamorous solution, his grandfather landed him a job with the national auditing agency.

The rookie bean counter immediately took to wading through a sea of government paperwork, guarding against fraud and waste. The work was demanding and tedious, but he never took his eyes off the dividend his new job would pay in time.

With some help from his mother and a year of savings, he had enough money for a ticket to California. Before he knew it, he had crossed the threshold of a local recruiter's office and begun a new journey as an Airman in the U.S. Air Force.

Fast forward four years and he's one of the 4th Space Operations Squadron's best satellite operators — battling the war against terrorism by ensuring global communication capabilities for worldwide missions.

"I love my job and the technology I work with," he said of working at Schriever Air Force Base, Colo.

For this high-tech warrior, a day on the job is a far cry from being stuck in a gloomy government office back in Surallah.

"Here, we help troops in the field," he said.

Recently Airman Sison bought another airline ticket, but this time he was headed home.

"I was proud to go back where so many people supported me for so long," he said. "Inside I felt like, 'Look at what I've done with my life.'"



**A young Senior Airman Joe Sison** swims with his father near the Filipino town of Surallah.